



The Hartford News

July 2 - 8, 2020



A LABOR OF LOVE AND REMEMBRANCE

Sharing the stories of Hartford Circus Fire victims

BY ANNE GOSHDIGIAN

When Mike Skidgell was cleaning out the basement at his mother's home in 2001, he came across a box of old newspapers, one of them dated July 8th, 1944. That was his late father's birth date, which accounted for it being saved all those years.

But the front page was all about the Hartford circus fire, a tragedy from two days earlier that had eclipsed even the war news. That issue listed the names and addresses of those who perished. "As I read through it", recalled Skidgell, "I saw that one of the kids who had died had lived in the same Plainville house I grew up in." That eerie coincidence "...just sucked me



in" he said. What began as curiosity about the fire—he'd heard very little about it—became a strong desire to know much more, and not long after, a mission, and an avocation. "My 'moneymakers' are my full-time work in the construction trades, and part-time as a creative artist doing pen-and-ink drawings and custom portraits." But much of his free time is devoted to the Facebook page he started more than a dozen years ago, Hartford Circus Fire 1944.

"In 2002 I went to the State Library and requested to look through the archives. There were books and boxes of circus fire related ephemera; claimant files, photos, death certificates, family info, and more. From this, I started making a list of the victims because none existed. Later that year I started my website as a place to store my information." Some time later, a publisher contacted him suggesting that he write a book. He did: The Hartford Circus Fire: Tragedy Under the Big Top. "It was exactly how I wanted it to be", Skidgell says. When Amazon asked for information on him prior to a distribution agreement, he laughs as he recalls telling them "Well, I've

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LGBT Community Rallies for Racial Equality

Greater Hartford's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans community joined with the Black Lives Matter movement Friday afternoon for a march and rally at the State Capitol and Hartford City Hall. The group protested both the recent deaths of black people like George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the hands of police officers as well as the violence and death inflicted on members of the LGBTQ community, particularly black trans women. Above is Sean Woke waving the American, Black Lives Matter and Rainbow flags in front of City Hall. At right is Hartford activist Kamora Herrington urging the crowd to re-examine American history as seen through the eyes of black Americans. (Hart photos)



Single-Use Plastic Bag Fee Reactivated

The State of Connecticut has resumed charging consumers 10 cents for single-use plastic bags, as of Tuesday, June 30. The 10 cent charge was first put into effect on August 1, 2019, but was temporarily suspended by Executive Order on March 26, 2020, in an effort to stem the spread of the Coronavirus. Any Connecticut retailer that

provides plastic bags to its customers in connection with a sale of goods is now required to collect the plastic bag fee. According to guidance from the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), given the most current scientific information available, reusable bags do not serve as a significant source of infection for COVID-19.

Hartford...Once Upon a Time



The Great Flood of 1936 devastated Hartford. This photo shows Charter Oak Avenue, looking east. At left is the Polish National Home which was only six years old at the time. The building, which hasn't changed much since this photo was taken, is considered to be one of Hartford's best examples of Art Deco architecture. At right is the Capewell Horseshoe Nail Company. This massive building, built in 1903, was recently converted into apartments. (Photo courtesy of Hartford Public Works)

NEWS BRIEFS

3-Day Rally for Racial Justice July 3-5

A coalition of local organizations will host Greater Hartford ACTIVATE CT 2020, a three-day series of rallies for racial justice over the 4th of July weekend at Riverfront Plaza in Downtown Hartford. The Activate Youth Rally will be held on Friday, July 3, from 5-7 pm; the Activate Men's Rally will be held Saturday, July 4, from 9-11 am; and the Activate Women's Rally will be held Sunday, July 5, from 204 pm. The event is being organized by My People Clinical Services, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Beta Sigma Lambda Chapter; and the Urban League of Greater Hartford. For more information, go to: <http://www.mypeoplecommunity.org/activatect.html>.

Hands On Hartford July 4th Free Lunch

Hands On Hartford will hold its annual Independence Day Community Lunch this Saturday, July 4, from 11:30 am - 1:30 pm, at the organization's headquarters at 55 Bartholomew Avenue in Hartford's Parkville neighborhood. Lunches may be taken "to go" or eaten outside, where limited seating is available. The menu includes hot dogs, baked beans, mac-and-cheese, coleslaw, potato chips, soda and holiday parfait. There will also be free books for the kids and a "summer survival kit" with sunscreen, insect repellent wipes and a rain poncho. The lunch is free to those in need. For more information, call Hands On Hartford at 860-728-3201.

MARG Meets July 9

The Maple Avenue Revitalization Group (MARG) will hold its monthly meeting at 6 pm on Thursday, July 9, in the lower level of Saint Augustine Church, 10 Campfield Avenue, Hartford. Public safety and other neighborhood issues will be discussed at the meeting. This is the group's first public meeting since March. For more information, call Hyacinth Yennie at 860-296-5543.

Yard Goats 2020 Season is Canceled

It's official; the Hartford Yard Goats will not be playing baseball in Dunkin Donuts Park this year, in order to limit the potential spread of the Coronavirus (also known as COVID-19). The decision to cancel the 2020 season was made by Minor League Baseball, the governing body for all professional baseball teams in the United States, Canada, and the

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Masons Host Testing Clinic

On Monday, June 29, Masonic Excelsior Lodge No. 3 at the corner of Main Street and Mahl Avenue in Hartford held a free walk-up COVID-19 testing clinic for people in the neighborhood (and anyone else) in partnership with Hartford HealthCare. Lodge members Robert DeCordova, Ross Sutherland and Charles Garfield are shown here with other volunteers. (Hart photo)

HPL’s Library on Wheels is On The Road Again

Hartford Public Library’s Library On Wheels is back in action, although the main library and all it’s branches remain closed. The Library on Wheels is currently making the following stops with books and information on the 2020 U.S. Census:

- Mondays: Wish School, 350 Barbour Street, 10 am - 3 pm.
- Wednesdays: Burr School, 400 Wethersfield Avenue, 9am-2pm
- Fridays: Free Center (formerly the Goodwin Branch Library); 460 New Britain Avenue, 8 am - 1 pm



HPL’s Michelle McFarland, Leticia Cotto, Chaylynn Reed and Elizabeth Rivera at Wish School in Hartford’s North End.

CT Residents Have 60 Days from Loss of Coverage to Enroll with Access Health CT

Workers who lose health insurance as a result of job loss may not know they have options, but Access Health CT (AHCT), the state’s Official Health Insurance Marketplace is helping people find the best coverage for themselves and their families. Losing insurance either from a furlough or a layoff is considered a ‘Qualifying Life Event,’ triggering a Special Enrollment Period for that individual and possibly their household. However, those who lost their insurance over the last two months may need to act quickly.

“We have increased our efforts in the community to help residents know they may qualify for a Special Enrollment if they lose their coverage because of job loss,” said Access Health CT Chief Executive

Officer, James Michel. “People can enroll any time within 60 days of losing their coverage. But for those who lost their health insurance in late April, the deadline to enroll is approaching fast.”

To help residents maintain quality and affordable healthcare coverage, Access Health CT recommends comparing options on AccessHealthCT.com to COBRA coverage, as the marketplace may offer a better, less expensive choice, and is the only place where people can qualify for financial help to lower their costs.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Access Health CT is working closely with the Department of Labor and other entities to reach businesses that are in the process of reducing their work force. Access Health CT

reminds individuals that based on their household income they could qualify not only for Qualified Health Plans (QHP), but for Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) which offer free or low-cost healthcare coverage.

Michel continues, “Access Health CT is helping people find the right health insurance coverage at a stressful time when they lose their jobs. Many people have never shopped for health insurance before and we don’t want them to miss out on the opportunity to select a better plan because they didn’t know about these options.”

AHCT has an educational website, Learn.AccessHealthCT.com, that has information and videos that describe in detail how to shop and enroll in coverage for QHP or Medicaid/CHIP plans. In addition, they are offering educational webinars with important information about the marketplace, its health insurance plans, and financial help. Please contact them at outreach@accesshealthct.com if you are interested in setting up a webinar.

Editor’s Note

Mike McGarry’s column will not appear in this week’s paper. Instead, he is using his usual space for this tribute to his friend, Patricia Conran, who passed away last month.

Passing Through the Narrow Door PATRICIA M. CONRAN

March 23, 1930 - June 22, 2020

“Being Christian is living and witnessing to faith in prayer; in works of charity; in promoting justice, in doing good. The whole of our life must pass through the narrow door which is Christ.” ~Pope Francis, Angelus Address, August 25, 2013

Committee. As to justice, Pat was a tireless proponent for life and served many years as the chairperson of our Pro-Life Committee coordinating events at our parish, providing educational materials, and advocating at public hearings for the dignity of life.

In 2014, the Archdiocese of Hartford recognized Pat and her husband Jed with the Saint Gianna Beretta Molla Pro-Life Award for their years of selfless dedication protecting the unborn. Married



This past week marked the passing of Patricia Conran, a pillar of the Cathedral of Saint Joseph’s parish family. To all of us, Pat embodied the Christian spirit as defined by Pope Francis by doing good every day. She led a prayerful life as an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, a daily communicant, and devotee to the Holy Rosary. A Cathedral Ambassador, her charity extended to the full life of the parish as an active member of numerous ministries including the Ministry of Hospitality, Funeral Ministry, Rosary Committee, and Sandwich

for over 60 years and always by one another’s side, Pat and Jed have served as models of goodness, decency, and love for many of us. A life of witnessing to faith in prayer, in works of charity, and in promoting justice -a Christian life, yes. Thank you, Pat. Requiescat in pace.



State Housing Assistance Plan Announced

By Brandon McGee, State Representative, 6th District

Governor Ned Lamont recently announced a comprehensive plan to put more than \$33 million in state and federal resources to work providing emergency assistance to renters, homeowners, and residential landlords impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency.

The COVID crisis has taken a toll on many Connecticut families. It is my hope, that this plan will go a long way to ensure that homeowners and renters across our state are able to afford their housing expenses throughout the duration of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Elements of this plan include:

- \$10 million rental assistance program for Connecticut residents impacted by COVID-19, administered through the Department of Housing, which will provide payments to landlords on behalf of approved tenant applicants, with a priority on lower-income households who have been denied unem-

ployment insurance;

- \$5 million for eviction prevention to help renters who were in the process of eviction before the declaration of the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- \$10 million to provide mortgage relief to homeowners who have suffered impacts from COVID-19 and whose mortgages are not federally insured, administered by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA);
- \$4 million in rapid rehousing funds to help people pay costs like security deposits and initial rent to exit homelessness to housing, administered by the Department of Housing;
- \$2.5 million rental assistance program for those who are ineligible for emergency assistance through the federal

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Clarification

BY DAVID SAMUELS

I recently wrote a column criticizing Intertown Realty that went to press before my complaint was addressed by Intertown management. I talk about accountability so now I must hold myself accountable. I had been confronted by an Intertown employee, was upset and should not have published the column. Intertown did address the fire alarm issue and after about a month it now appears to be resolved. I apologize.

THE HARTFORD NEWS

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A Fork in the Road

COMMENTARY BY TOM SWARR

Editor's Note: Due to a misunderstanding, only a portion of this column was printed in last week's Hartford News. Below is the full column.

I am struggling with the daily news: COVID-19 pandemic. Black Lives Matter protesting police brutality. Out-of-control fireworks across the city. Glaciers melting faster than ever and threatening coastal cities. We are facing three existential crises all at once. By existential, I mean a crisis of biblical proportions; plagues of locusts, raging fires, floods, pandemics... Oh wait, that is already happening!

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that there is a physical reality out there that obeys the laws of science and cares little about our political ideologies. Climate change is also a real physical phenomenon. We are pumping CO₂ and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Studies suggest that our climate is changing faster than we originally thought. The recent observations track what used to be the worst-case scenarios. We are running out of time to act to avoid making a planet much less hospitable for humans. But climate change is only #3 on my list of worries.

Coming to terms with the social injustices of our economic system is #2 on my list. Just take a walk around Hartford. Trash littered streets. Bulky waste dumped everywhere. Graffiti scarred buildings. Cars barreling through red lights. And the current protests about police brutality and bias toward those of color are the end result of zoning and other policies that concentrate poverty in urban neighborhoods of despair. As much as I fear significant climate impacts will

occur in my lifetime (although 70, unfortunately longevity runs on both sides of my family), unless we act to create a more inclusive and just economy, we will see social disruption before the worst of the climate impacts.

That brings me to my #1 worry—abandonment of the democratic principles upon which this country was founded. I grew up believing in a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Only later as an adult, did I learn that my optimism was a privilege reserved mostly for white males. Yes, our founding was based on an immoral compromise.

But rather than blow up the entire system, I would prefer to make those principles work for all, regardless of color, faith, or sexual orientation. We cannot solve the social injustice of climate change crises with only a privileged few.

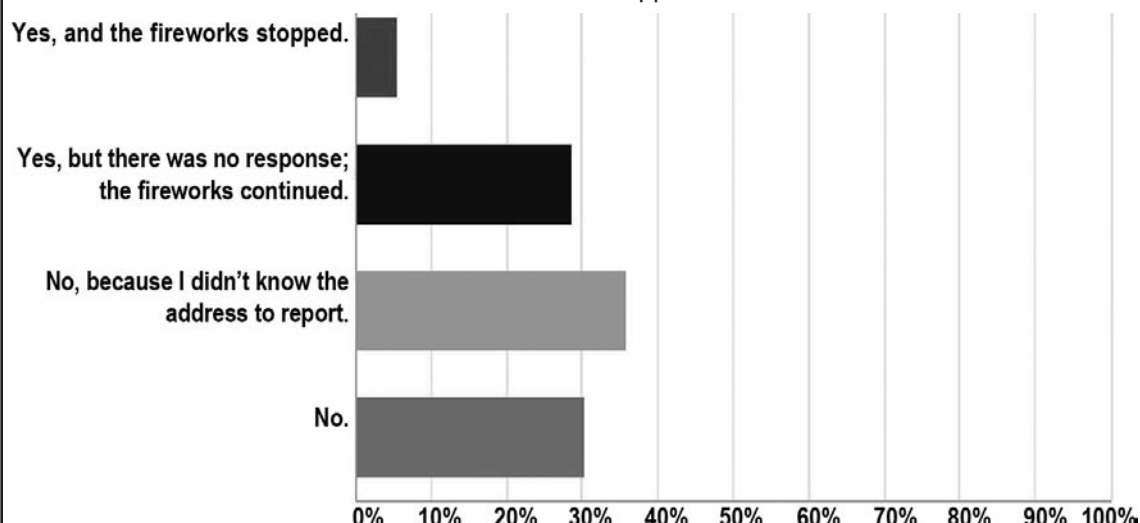
We have come to a fork in the road. There is no middle path. Only hard choices about what kind of a new normal we want to create after the pandemic eases. We can choose hope and faith to rebuild a more inclusive and just economy grounded in low-carbon technologies. Or we can choose fear and defensive reactions to protect business as usual. We, the citizens, will have to act. Our legislators at every level of government, from City Council to Congress, have abandoned their responsibility to govern. There is no leadership because the politicians are afraid of saying or doing anything that might complicate their next election campaign.

Yogi Berra advised, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." Will we do better than our Founding Fathers in making tough compromises to balance conflicting views on our desired future?

Hartford Fireworks Follow Up Survey Results, June 30, 2020

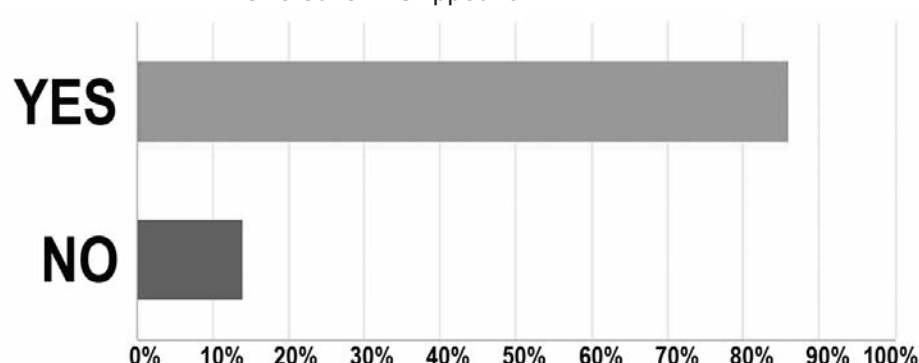
Have you used the new fireworks text or phone number to make a complaint?

Answered: 56 Skipped: 1



Since the new plan started on June 14th, are fireworks still a problem in your neighborhood?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 0



Results for this poll were gathered through the Hartford News Facebook page. Several people left comments, many of which questioned why they had to call in a complaint; why couldn't the officers on patrol hear or see the fireworks, or why not use the shot detection software to guide them to the problem areas? Others wondered why people are not being arrested for repeatedly breaking the law, as there are several locations where it is a recurring problem. Many said that they've had no response, or if they had it was hours later. To see all of the comments and survey results, go to the Hartford News Facebook Page (Hartford News-Southside Media). No Facebook account necessary.

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Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association
A Hartford Neighborhood Revitalization Zone

News & Views



HARTFORD
HAS IT



ASYLUM HILL NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

From the
Executive Director
BY DAVID MACDONALD

Open Letter to the Mayor and City Council on Civilian Oversight of the Hartford Police Department

Mayor Bronin and City Councilpersons,

We write to express our strong support for those voices calling for greater transparency and accountability by strengthening civilian oversight of the Hartford Police Department. As you know, the composition of Asylum Hill includes 75% Black and Hispanic residents and is predominantly low- income, making police misconduct an issue which disproportionately threatens our quality of life.

AHNA has been working since early June to gather facts and determine the state of civilian oversight of policing in Hartford, including recently hosting a panel discussion with experts on the topic. Based on the discussion and hours of research by our members we have been troubled to learn that:

- the Civilian Police Review Board (CPRB) met only five (5) out of twelve (12) required meetings in 2018 and 2019, as of today has not met since January of this year;
- the board is often unable to achieve the required quorum of five (5) commissioners due to unfilled vacancies and lack of alternates, which has resulted in a large backlog of cases and failure to complete case reviews within the ninety (90) days set out in Ch. 2, Article V, Division 5, Sec. 2- 196.13 of the Hartford Municipal Code;
- the board has not been informed by the Chief of Police annually of the final dispositions of complaints and disciplinary actions taken, as is required by CPRB by-laws, for several years;
- automatic resignation for lack of attendance has not been observed, and appointments to fill unexpired terms have not been made by your office within the forty-five (45) days required by municipal code;
- there appears to be undue political influence on the board’s functioning via the appointment of DTC members and other party operatives, rather than appointments made “based on...experience and expertise in fields relevant to the charge” of the board, as code requires.

AHNA began 23 years ago as the Asylum Hill Problem Solving Committee with a Justice Department grant and a mission of improving communications between the community and police. We have a long history of working to provide a public forum for neighborhood input and stand ready to once again partner with the mayor, council, and other stakeholders to address the issues that activists and protestors have brought to the forefront of our public discussion. We call on the mayor and city council to listen to the voices of residents and to take the necessary steps to make the CPRB a functioning body, which instills public trust in our police through real civilian oversight.

Sincerely, Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association
Adopted 6/22/2020
Jacqueline D. McKinney, Chair
David MacDonald, Executive Director

Next AHNA Meeting

AHNA traditionally does not schedule a general meeting in July. Our Next meeting will be August 3rd. Please check our website www.Asylumhill.org or our Facebook page @AHNA.asylumhill for the agenda the weekend before or the next issue of the News & Views on July 30th.

Black Lives Matter in Asylum Hill



There are several signs in Asylum Hill that remind us that, black lives matter, but the most prominent is the sign on the parking lot at My People Clinical Services at 111 Gillett St. For those who are not aware of this longtime Asylum Hill treasure, you can Google either that or Abdul Rahmaan Muhammad. Abdul is the founder and Executive Director of MPCS, as well as the ingenious Ice Cream for a Dream that we wrote about some years ago. It continues on as do many of the other programs that Abdul has been responsible for.

Most recently Abdul evolved a Fatherhood Engagement program group session into what became the Fatherhood Manologues that premiered on Father’s Day this year. The idea was to get nine African-American men to tell a story about father, either theirs or themselves, and then to refine those stories into performances that could change the narrative.

“I’m all about changing narratives, like I want people to be able to see Black men fully, not only when we die, not only when we’re mad, not only when we are in handcuffs, but when we are being our genuine true selves, when we are talking about the love of our lives, like our children.” Abdul said to Ray Hardman at CT Public in an interview that can be found there. All of this began before COVID and was finally presented a month after George Floyd’s murder. All of

the Manologues are now available on Facebook there.

Much of the coaching that allowed these stories to become performance pieces was accomplished by Godfrey Simmons at Hartbeat who was featured in our February News & Views.

In an email that went out June 2nd, Godfrey Simmons organized a “virtual space specifically for Greater Hartford-area BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) artists, activists, students ~ anyone who needs an BIPOC affinity space for strategizing, decompressing and healing in these traumatic times” to be followed by “virtual space for local, self-identified White people to strategize around how to “show up” for BIPOC and commit to practicing anti-racism in their everyday lives.”

The latter event, which I attended, was titled “Breaking the White Silence.” It had more than 20 attendees, many connected with Hartbeat Ensemble. It was co-facilitated by Patricia O’Rourke and Peter Callahan, and it allowed all of us to talk about our feelings regarding the current situation, and ways that we could help without getting in the way.

I’m proud to see that Abdul, Godfrey and our friends at CT Public are all leading the way. To stay up to date go to any of their Facebook pages, Hartbeat, My People and CT Public.

Ted Carroll retires from Leadership Greater Hartford

Months ago, Ted Carroll announced to the AHNA board that he would be retiring at the end of June in 2020.

At the time it seemed like a long way off, but even then it was not welcomed news. Ted had been helping, guiding, and coaching AHNA for the past seven years, both by serving as a consultant and shepherding members into Leadership Greater Hartford’s various programs, to help us understand and implement what was needed to be an effective board of an effective organization.

His calm and measured demeanor gave all of us a sense of confidence that we could do this. He also helped us arrive at a clearer idea of what the “this” was. He was always the optimist, and his experience guiding so many nonprofit organizations before us gave us much needed encouragement and assurance.

So naturally, when this pandemic and the resulting gathering restrictions came about, the farewell party that should have been, like every other in person gathering, was reduced to an online Zoom event. The only consolation is that it is all recorded and available on Facebook.

Attending the event provided a powerful reminder of just how broadly Ted’s talents and kindness extended. Even while he was spending so much time and attention focused on AHNA and Asylum Hill, he was doing much the same for numerous other organizations in Hartford and Greater Hartford.

Little did we know that Leadership Greater Hartford was just one of many such programs around the country, and that they even had an organization of their own called the Association of Leadership Programs. Not surprisingly, Ted served in a leadership role in that organization as well, and when you go to their website, the first banner photo shows very familiar faces from LGH and Ted receiving the Lifetime Legacy Award.

Throughout this article I’ve been using the past tense, but the best part of the farewell party was when Ted spoke and said that while he was stepping down from his position as President and CEO of LGH, he was not done giving to the community.

Without committing to any specific plans he said “As I prepare to retire from my fulltime job, please know that I’m not done yet either. I intend to stay here, to work, to volunteer, to worship, to play with you. I look forward to spending more time with my family, including my grandkids. And when it’s safe I hope that Jane and I can travel... But I do leave with my tank full. It is full of love for you and this community.”

For the full program go to: <https://bit.ly/tcarrollfb>. And to hear all of Ted’s remarks start at 29:45 It’s well worth listening to more than once.

EXPLORING ASYLUM HILL SYP’S GRILLE

Asylum Hill now has another eatery at 628 Asylum Ave. It’s called Syp’s Grille and it’s owner, Ken Rodriguez is determined to make it work. I stopped by several times to see how the opening is going during these very challenging times, and I’m encouraged.

Ken was born and raised in Hartford and he has owned or managed several restaurants in the area so he’s experienced both with the community and the business. Needless to say, he began this project before COVID became a thing, but he has adapted to it rather well. It’s a good sign that the main thing that drew him to this location was the outdoor dining potential. As he puts it “when I walked in, I loved the area, I loved the patio and I decided to lease it.”

His initial hours are very ambitious, 10:00am to 10:00pm 7 days a week and his menu, which can be found on his Facebook page at <https://bit.ly/facebookstats>

includes popular American classics like hamburgers, hotdogs, subs and wings as well as Puerto Rican favorites like empanadillas, carne frita and chicharrones de pollo.



Ken speaks about Syp’s Grille like someone who has thought a great deal about it. He seems mostly unfazed by the pandemic restrictions and determined to move forward. His vision extends well beyond this current crisis.

“Why I do this” he offered, “is because everyday you meet new people and as we get older, there’s a place where your friends can come, and we get to see them a lot

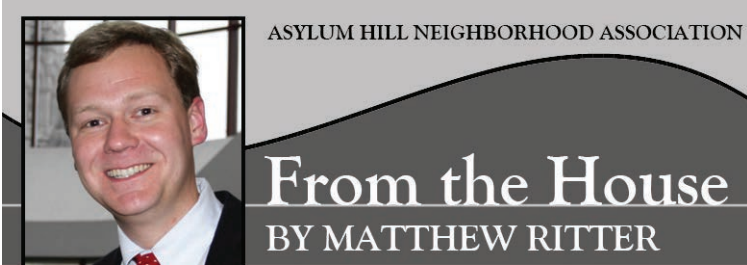
more often... one of my goals is to... have an environment where people like to come, feel safe to come, when you walk through the door, you’re family... I’m going to treat you like family.”

On my first visit, I explained a bit about NRZs in general, and AHNA in particular. Ken was very interested, and wants to be included in our next meeting.

The idea of being able to partner with a neighborhood organization to make Asylum Hill and Hartford a better place for everyone resonates with him.

He quickly identified parking as a hindrance to success and has several ideas as to how to solve it, both for Syp’s and the other shops at Capitol View including adding metered parking on that section of Asylum Ave.

If you get a chance when you’re looking to relax with good food, stop by.



Racial and Social Justice

In the past few weeks, I have heard from neighbors, friends, constituents and residents across Connecticut that the General Assembly must quickly convene a special session to address issues regarding police accountability in our State.

As we know, prejudice and injustice have not been relegated to the pages of history. I am glad to say that I expect the Legislature to be in special session in July to vote on these necessary issues.

Please know that Hartford is well represented in the drafting of legislation that will be voted on in special session. For example, I have worked very closely with Rep. Brandon McGee (who is chair of the legislature’s Black and Puerto Rican Caucus) and Rep. Josh Hall (who is my appointment to the Police Accountability Task Force).

I am hopeful that the final bill will make Connecticut a national leader in this conversation.

We must also look at a host of other issues in the coming months, including more funding for affordable housing, an end to restrictive zoning laws, an increase in education funding, better access to primary medical care and mental health counseling, and an amendment to our State Constitution to make it easier to vote in our State.

Please contact me at Matthew.Ritter@cga.ct.gov, or by phone at (860) 240-8489, if you have any questions, concerns or ideas regarding social justice and police reform.

VOLUNTEERS OF THE MONTH

POLLINATOR GARDENERS

Most of the time when people plant flower gardens, they choose the flowers based on color or fragrance, and occasionally as edible. But we, as creatures with even greater curiosity than squirrels like to know things. It’s that curiosity that has led us to discover a lot about flowers besides which ones we think are most beautiful, and it’s also caused us to discover that we’re not the only creatures that like flowers. Bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other smaller flying creatures do as well and the flowers like them back. We call them pollinators. They move the pollen from flower to flower and plant to plant and they are responsible for a lot of good in nature, which we’re finding out, is also good for us humans.

All of this is by way of introduction into the “Love Your Block” Grant that Lynn Johnson championed in Asylum Hill. The goal was to create six small pollinator gardens in various locations in Asylum Hill for these migrating creatures to feed on along their way. The first step was to enlist the aid of Mike McGarry, her neighbor, long-time gardener and purveyor of plants to get involved, which he did.

From there they went to the local churches, all with lots of green space and accustomed to doing good things, to help with planting these special gardens.


Since these pollinators are especially attracted to Aster, Bee Balm, Butterfly Weed and Purple Cone Flowers, Mike got 30 of each variety, and that’s what was provided and planted.

Each of the participating churches rounded up their volunteers to help. At Immanuel Congregational Church they included Judi Gilligan, Ann Conable, Joanna Geber and Richard Syracuse; at Grace Lutheran Church Louisa Barton Duguay, Sue Carey and Emmanuella Hart provided the labor; at Glory Chapel, program participants did the work and fortunately one of them was a professional landscaper. Asylum Hill Congregational Church had the help of Paul Grimmeisen, Kathye Cipes, Susan Fellman and Paul O’Mara. Saint Joseph Cathedral of course is taken care of by Mike McGarry and his fellow Knights of Columbus, and at Trinity Episcopal it was Peter Green.

When the grant schedule got delayed by the pandemic, Lynn had to choose between conforming with that schedule or nature’s schedule which is not as flexible. She went ahead with nature’s schedule so that nearly everything was already in the ground way before June 25th when they got the news that they had received the grant. Fortunately all of them will bloom beginning in mid to late

summer so they have a while to get established and we have some time to see how successful the planting will be. Photos of all of the gardens are available at: <https://bit.ly/poll-gardphotos>

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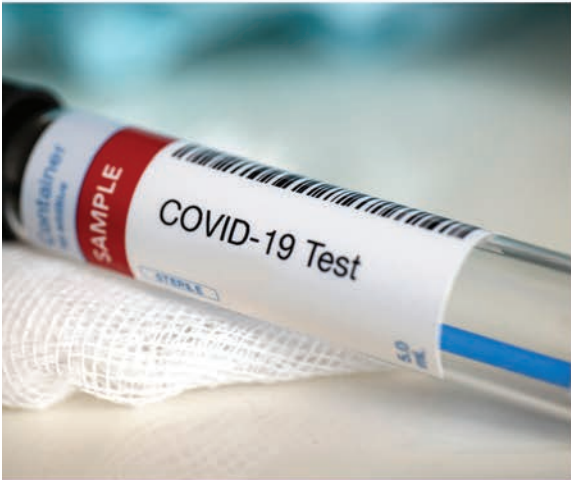
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Milan USA Passes Out Free Masks

Milan USA, an organization of Indian-American devoted to charitable causes and celebrating the culture of their homeland, recently passed out free face masks to people in need at Busnell Park in Downtown Hartford. Shown above are Renu Sharma, Suresh Sharma and Hari Sharma. The Hartford Fire Department Cadets and representatives from Camp Courant also participated in the event. (Hart photo)

New Briefs

Continued from page 1

Dominican Republic that are affiliated with Major League Baseball clubs through their farm systems. Fans who purchased tickets for a 2020 Hartford Yard Goats home game will soon be contacted by a Yard Goats representative. Although long-expected, the decision is a major blow to the Yard Goats, who quickly became one minor league baseball's major success stories since playing their

first game in 2017. Dunkin' Donuts Park attracted over one-million fans over its first three seasons in Hartford. Last season, the Yard Goats drew a franchise record 414,946 fans, including 51 sellouts, and led the entire Eastern League in total attendance for the second straight year. The Yard Goats became the first minor league baseball club in Connecticut history to attract over 400,000 plus fans in consecutive seasons.

From Capitol Hill

Continued from page 2

- CARES Act, including those who are undocumented, administered by the Department of Housing;
- \$1.8 million in funding for reentry and rehousing assistance for people exiting incarceration, administered by the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness;
- Extending the residential eviction moratorium to August 25, bringing Connecticut's measures in line with federal measures (the CARES Act prevents evictions from most properties until late summer); and
- Extending the opportunity to apply a portion of any security deposit worth more than one month's rent toward rental payments.

All housing assistance programs administered through the state and through CHFA will include housing counseling to help renters and homeowners problem solve and develop plans to pay housing costs going forward.

For more information on the resources, please see the following websites:

- Connecticut Department of Housing: portal.ct.gov/doh
- Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA): www.chfa.org
- Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH): cceh.org

As always, please do not hesitate to reach out if I can be of any assistance to you and your family.

Take Care,
Brandon McGee Jr.

Hartford Land Bank Requests for Proposals

The Hartford Land Bank, Inc., a Connecticut nonstock organization and 501(c)(3) nonprofit established to be a land bank operating in the city of Hartford, Connecticut, has released two requests for proposals seeking help in acquiring and maintaining its initial inventory of properties. Responses are due July 31, 2020.

The Land Bank invites qualified property maintenance firms to submit pricing information for services described in its Property Maintenance RFP.

The Land Bank seeks proposals for professional services to provide rehabilitation cost & timeline estimates and construction management in its Rehabilitation Specialist & Construction Management RFP.

To request a copy of either RFP, please email info@hartfordlandbank.org or call (860) 335-0347.

CRT Provides Free Summer Meals

More than 1,000 meals per day will be served to children 18 and under, free of charge in Hartford and Neighboring Towns (Enfield, East Hartford, Glastonbury and Manchester)

To help combat childhood hunger during the summer month when school is out of session, and to ensure that children in our local communities have access to healthy, nutritious meals during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis, the Community Renewal Team (CRT) is proud to participate in the federally funded Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) once again this summer.

Under the SFSP, nutritious meals (including Breakfast and/or Lunch, and even Supper), are provided free of charge to children 18 years of age and under at 11 locations in Hartford, East Hartford, Enfield and Glastonbury; and at one closed site in Manchester that requires pre-registration to participate.

Each weekday, CRT will deliver up to 1,000 meals for children per day.

This year, to accommodate social-distancing requirements, and to help ensure the safety of both the children and families using this program, as well as the health and safety of the CRT personnel delivering the meals, the SFSP will become a "grab-and-go" service, so meals can be picked up and enjoyed at home. Meals will not be consumed on site. Please plan to wear a mask or face covering when picking up meals.

Please confer with individual pick-up locations about any closures this summer, such as due to holidays.

Individuals and families interested in receiving more information about the Summer Food Service Program should contact CRT, 555 Windsor Street, Hartford, CT 06120 or call 860-560-5600.

HARTFORD SITES	SERVING TIMES	DATES
Adventures in the City Freedom School 47 Vine Street, Hartford	Breakfast: 10-11 AM Lunch: 12:00 -2:00 PM <i>Every weekday, except Friday</i>	Through Aug. 6
CRT Generations Program 35 Clark Street, Hartford	Lunch: 12:00 -2:30 PM	July 6 - Aug. 14
Greater Joy Mission Church 49 Charter Oak Avenue, Hartford	Breakfast: 9:00-10:00 AM Lunch: 12:00 -1:00 PM	Through Aug. 7
New Beginnings Early Learning Center 70 Forest Street, Hartford	Breakfast: 9:00-10:00 AM Lunch: 12:00 -1:00 PM	Through Aug. 14
Saint Monica's Episcopal Church 375 Main Street, Hartford	Lunch: 12:30 -1:30 PM	Through Aug. 7
Wilson Gray YMCA 444 Albany Avenue, Hartford	Lunch: 12:00 -1:00 PM	Through Aug. 14

Circus Fire

Continued from page 2

got this Facebook group with 100 people." (Today, there are nearly 900). He posts on that page almost every day, featuring a 1940s-era pre-fire photo of a victim along with a biographical sketch and—when available—a photo of their cemetery monument, which he travels the state to find and photograph himself. The result is that a lot of people connected with the deceased or survivors (he also has a listing of those) contact him through email or the Facebook page. Many of them never knew about their relatives' escape from the tragedy, often due to PTSD. He frequently hears things such as "My grandfather never talked about it" and "I had no idea she'd been there." (Note: My late parents and my eldest brother, age 79, escaped and survived the circus fire. The parents rarely spoke of it, and my brother was too young to recall that day.) Mike Skidgell has a lot of admiration for Stewart O'Nan, former Connecticut resident and author of the acclaimed book *The Circus Fire*, which Skidgell deems the best book written on the subject. They met and developed a friendship around the time of the 2014 60th anniversary of the fire, and now O'Nan often refers readers' questions on the tragedy to Skidgell.

Mike admits to being deeply affected by many of the stories he's unearthed. "Since I've been studying the circus fire and searching for information about the victims for nearly 20 years, I've found myself relating more to different victims each year, as I age. I recall feeling an understanding for people in their 30's who died back when I began my interest, and now

I find myself relating also to the older people who died. I now understand that these people probably had the same aches and pains that I now do, and exiting that burning tent was an added challenge for them. As far as individual victims, the case of Ray Erickson has long been one incredibly distressing one for me, and the story finally got some serious coverage last summer. You can read more about him on his bio page on my website, but long story short – Ray's uncle brought him to the hospital with serious burns, near death, then the uncle (severely burned himself) went back to the circus site to find other family members. Ray was never seen again; someone else apparently claimed him as theirs and buried him as such." Another case that has recently come to light pertains to the unidentified bodies that were exhumed last year. Skidgell elaborates "One of the bodies has been determined to be that of a black woman, and only one black woman is known to have died in the circus fire, Maurice Goff, and she was believed to have been buried in the same casket as her little daughter Muriel who also died in the fire. My deep concern is that little Muriel has been buried with a stranger all along, while her mother Maurice has been in the grave of the unidentified body. I feel like this case could be figured out and solved if we could find a Goff family member, but I haven't pursued this as aggressively as maybe I should. There were a couple of boys William and Richard Epps who were nephews of Maurice's and they grew up in Hartford; one was a Hartford firefighter for many years, but I don't know if they're even still alive."

Of great public interest through-

out the 76 years since the Hartford circus fire has been the identity of "Little Miss 1565"—the unclaimed victim who was buried anonymously and memorialized every year on July 6th by members of the Hartford police and fire departments. It was eventually determined that the child was Eleanor Cook. So is it case closed? Skidgell has this to say: "There is absolutely complete and total doubt about 1565 being Eleanor Cook. They knew it wasn't her in 1944 and the dental records, body descriptions, and clothing do not match, nor do photo comparisons. 'Facts' seem to have been created to coerce the brother to agree with the identification. and the mother was too old and worn down to fight about it. There seems to have been an agenda in place when the identification was made. The story of the 'solved case' sure was well distributed."

It may seem odd to say that a Facebook page devoted to a tragedy and its victims also offers a certain poetic sort of beauty and even a sense of peace, in addition to being a chronicle of a sad time in Hartford's history, but Hartford Circus Fire 1944 truly accomplishes that, not unlike a visit to Cedar Hill, Old North Cemetery, or the Ancient Burying Ground. Mike Skidgell welcomes inquiries from information-seekers including families and friends of the victims and survivors, researchers, and students. You can email him at circus-fire1944@sbcglobal.net. Thanks to his chance discovery of a yellowing newspaper, he created and continues to maintain a place where those who were lost can still be found, and remembered for who they were, not merely "victims."



MARG Cleans Up!

On Saturday, June 27, the Maple Avenue Revitalization Group (MARG) held its annual spring clean-up of the Barry Square neighborhood. MARG President Hyacinth Yennie (right) said that the success of the event was made possible by the many

volunteers and the support provided by neighborhood businesses and organizations, including KNOX, Inc., Hartford Youth Service Corps, Bravo Supermarket, Hartford Pizza, Hartford Fire Department, Captain Powell and the Hartford

Police Department, the 6th District Town Committee, Hartford Public Works, Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA), Logan Singerman, City Council Member Wildaliz Bermudez and MARG members. (Hart photo)

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imity to shopping centers, restaurants and
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El Informativo Latino

Gobernador Anuncia Asistencia Financiera Para Inquilinos En CT

El Gobernador de Connecticut, Ned Lamont estará realizando una conferencia de prensa para actualizar la información sobre los esfuerzos del estado para combatir el coronavirus y la reapertura del estado.

Lamont, anunció el lunes asistencia financiera para inquilinos, propietarios de viviendas y propietarios residenciales que se vieron afectados por la pandemia de coronavirus y dijo que extenderá la moratoria de desalojos residenciales hasta agosto.

Lamont anunció el lunes el plan será para "destinar más de \$33 millones en recursos estatales y federales a trabajar para proporcionar asistencia de emergencia".

"La crisis de COVID ha afectado a muchas familias de Connecticut. Sabemos que algunos inquilinos y propietarios de viviendas están teniendo dificultades para pagar los costos de su vivienda. Es fundamental que brindemos ayuda de emergencia para que puedan permanecer alojados y para apoyar a

los propietarios residenciales, muchos de los cuales son pequeñas empresas familiares", dijo Lamont.

Según Lamont, estas son algunas de las cosas incluidas en el plan:

- Programa de asistencia de alquiler de \$10 millones para residentes de Connecticut afectados por COVID-19. El Departamento de Vivienda proporcionará pagos a los propietarios en nombre de los inquilinos que estén aprobados. La prioridad estará en los hogares de bajos ingresos a quienes se les haya denegado el seguro de desempleo, dijo Lamont.
- \$5 millones para la prevención de desalojos para ayudar a los inquilinos que estaban en proceso de desalojo antes de que COVID-19 fuera declarado una emergencia de salud pública.
- \$10 millones para proporcionar alivio hipotecario a los propi-

etarios de viviendas que tienen hipotecas que no están aseguradas por el gobierno federal y que han sufrido los efectos del coronavirus.

- \$4 millones en fondos de reubicación rápida para ayudar a los residentes a pagar cosas como depósitos de seguridad y renta inicial para ayudarlos a salir de la calle.
- Programa de asistencia de alquiler de \$2.5 millones para aquellos que no son elegibles para asistencia de emergencia a través de la Ley federal CARES. Esto incluye a los indocumentados.
- \$1.8 millones para fondos para reingreso y asistencia de reubicación para personas que están saliendo de la cárcel.

Lamont también dijo que está extendiendo la moratoria de desalojo residencial al 25 de agosto, lo que dijo que alinearía las medidas de Connecticut con las medidas federales.

Sindicatos Exigen El Despido De La Jefa De Servicios Médicos De CT Barbara Cass

POR: MARICARMEN CAJAHUARINGA

Una multitud de trabajadores asistentes de salud se congregaron en protesta el jueves para exigir el despido inmediato de la jefa de Servicios Médicos de Connecticut, Barbara Cass, alegando que ella ha "fallado miserablemente" en cumplir su trabajo al no proteger a los miles de trabajadores de salud que arriesgan su vida durante la pandemia del COVID-19 en los centros envejecientes.

ciones, los trabajadores fueron amenazados por sus respectivos centros de trabajo; entre ir a trabajar o quedar despedidos y no tener protecciones laborales esenciales ellos piden que es necesario implementar regulaciones que permitan condiciones seguras mientras trabajan y están expuestos al COVID-19, y que al mismo tiempo puedan expresar libremente sus preocupaciones sin temor a represalias.



Foto: SEIU 1199

La protesta se llevó a cabo a las afueras de la oficina central del Departamento de Salud en Hartford con pedidos acalorados. Según la unión SEIU1199, Cass, ha ignorado en repetidas oportunidades sus pedidos en proveer equipo de protección PPE, a más de 37 mil trabajadores asistentes de salud, quienes en su mayoría están conformados por hispanos y afro-americanos, dándoles así un trato discriminatorio.

Por su parte, el jefe de personal del estado dijo que, "Barbara Cass y el equipo de DPH han estado trabajando incansablemente para abordar problemas de calidad y seguridad en nuestras instalaciones de enfermería".

Las peticiones de los trabajadores se volvieron virales cuando compartieron unas fotos donde mostraron que utilizan bolsas de basura como protección contra el Coronavirus. Por su parte, los administradores de los centros de envejecientes, dicen que eso es una calumnia.

Pero los sindicatos atestiguan que no se les ha protegido desde el inicio de la pandemia. Entre las muchas culpas gobernador Lamont, y las obligaciones que los centros de envejecimiento privados no toman para sus empleados, los trabajadores quedan desprotegidos durante el mortal virus. Cabe resaltar que mas del 70% de muertes por COVID-19 se registraron en los centros envejecientes.

Tanya Beckford, quien es una asistente de enfermería certificada, denunció ante los medios que fue obligada a quedarse a trabajar mientras tenía una alta fiebre y síntomas del COVID-19 en su lugar de labores ubicado en Newington. No solo estaba enferma, pero su empleador no le proveyó el equipo PPE, exponiéndola a que transmita el contagio del virus a los residentes ancianos del centro.

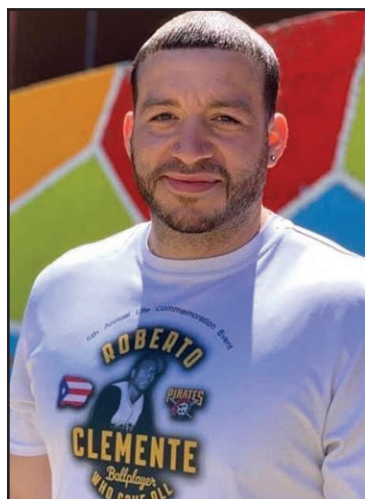
Debido a las numerosas peti-

A vista de la presión sindicalista, el gobernador Lamont se ha visto en la necesidad de buscar una investigación independiente que se realizará por intermediarios. El estado está actualmente buscando una firma que realice ese trabajo, que exponga y solucione las peticiones de los trabajadores.

A consecuencia de la falta de consideración para los trabajadores, durante el fin de semana, la oficina del gobernador Lamont reportó que 64 trabajadores de centros de envejecientes en el estado han sido infectados con el COVID-19. Los casos reportados se realizaron entre el 17 y 23 de junio, en 212 asilos de ancianos respectivamente. Desde el inicio de la pandemia 8,745 centros de ancianos contrajeron el virus, y 2,739 han fallecido, aunque en las últimas semanas, las infecciones por el virus han decaído en el estado.

Mientras tanto, el destino laboral de Barbara Cass, queda en la incertidumbre de los sindicalistas, quienes siguen exigiendo su despido inmediato. Durante las marchas, las uniones han expresado que se unirán al nuevo movimiento civil, el cual busca el beneficio de las comunidades de color, al sentirse que los trabajadores minoritarios de salud, han sido descuidados.

Maricarmen Cajahuaringa es periodista y productora de Boceto Media. Puede contactarla en bocetomediame@gmail.com



¡COLOREALO, versión vertical!

Raul Irizarry se unió a The Trust for Public Land como Gerente del Programa de Connecticut en marzo de 2020. Como autoproclamado artista, arquitecto paisajista y creador de lugares, le encanta cómo su trabajo combina construir comunidad con arte, diseño y el aire libre. Al crecer en una ciudad, los parques siempre fueron una oportunidad para recuperarse de las demandas de la vida en la ciudad. Raúl siempre ha creído que todos merecen un espacio al aire libre vibrante para disfrutar. Raúl espera que te unas a él para mirar hacia el futuro más verde de Bridgeport. ¿Quiere ayudar a abogar por la costa de Bridgeport? Únase a la Junta Asesora de Waterfront, que se reúne mensualmente y está abierta a todos. Obtenga más información en <https://www.tpl.org/our-work/bridgeport-waterfront-pathway@trustforpublicland>. De parte de Hartford Newspapers y La Diferente Radio muchos éxitos. Orgullo Puertorriqueño. By Iris Rodriguez

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HPL Offers Online Citizenship Classes

Hartford Public Library will begin offering online U.S. citizenship classes starting next month. Classes will be held on Saturdays, starting July 11, from 1 to 3 pm. Class registration is required by texting or calling 860-490-8402 or reaching out via e-mail to learning@hplct.org.